

Get Involved!
Become a
Seattle
RainCatcher

**Harvest the rain and support the
Restore Our Waters strategy.
Become a Seattle RainCatcher
Pilot Program Partner.**

Seattle
 Public
Utilities

Seattle RainCatchers —A Truly Seattle Solution

How can a RainCatcher System protect the environment?

- ◆ Seattle's RainCatcher pilot program is investigating ways to protect the environment by keeping storm water out of the Combined Sewer System to reduce Combined Sewer Overflows.
- ◆ Seattle's Combined Sewer System is a mix of waste-water and storm water. Wastewater from our homes is carried to the treatment plant in underground sewer pipes. Some sewer pipes also collect rain that flows from roofs into downspouts or across streets into storm drains. During heavy rains, when pipes are full, this system can overflow into lakes, rivers, streams and Puget Sound — these are called Combined Sewer Overflows.

Cistern — Rain Barrel — What's the difference?

- ◆ Rain barrels, the smaller cousins of cisterns, are made of thick plastic and hold 50-60 gallons of rainfall that can be used for irrigation. Seattle Public Utilities' recent program to introduce rain barrels to city residents was a huge success.
- ◆ Residential cisterns, the basis for the Seattle RainCatcher pilot project, take a more ambitious approach to water storage. Cisterns selected for the pilot are constructed of durable plastic in blue, green or black. The size of the cistern is based on the size of the roof. Storage capacity ranges from 300 to 1000 gallons. These models can be discreetly situated in the yard behind landscaping or next to the house.

Cisterns: A new twist on an old technology

- ◆ It was a good idea then and it's a good idea now. Cisterns were dug back in the Bronze Age, 3,000 years ago. Modern cisterns employ that ancient technology, harvesting rainwater for later use in the summer.
- ◆ Here's the Seattle RainCatcher twist — in the winter, we use cisterns to catch rainwater during heavy storms and slowly release it later, helping to prevent Combined Sewer Overflows.



As an added benefit, your cistern can store rainwater in summer for landscape and garden irrigation.



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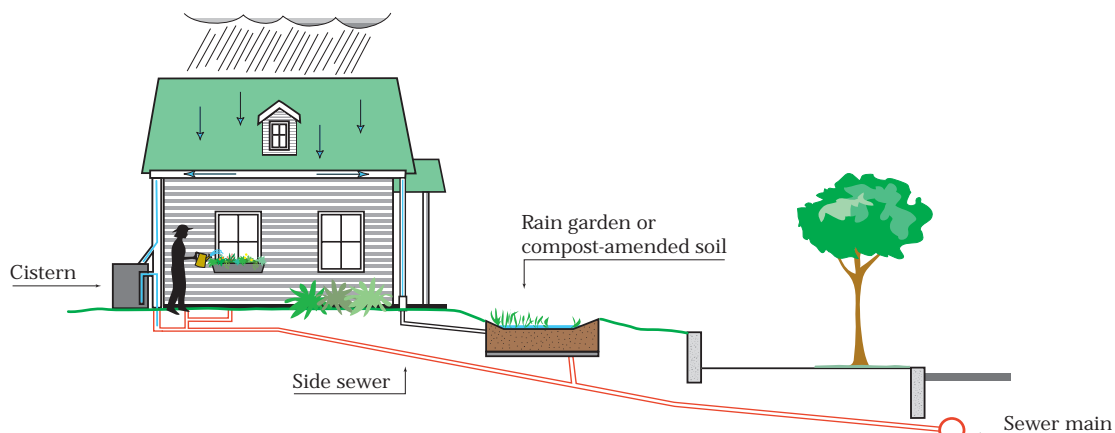
A custom-designed RainCatcher System — part of a sustainable yard

- ◆ SPU will help you harvest rainwater from your roof, then link your gutters and downspouts to collect rainwater in your own state-of-the-art RainCatcher System.
- ◆ Each yard is unique, so SPU will work with you to design your system. In addition to the cistern, the pilot program offers two landscaping opportunities that may work for you.
 - We may design and install a rain garden — a special planted area with water tolerant plants, spread with rich, absorbent soils.
 - We may also aerate and spread compost on your lawn to help retain rainwater so it infiltrates slowly back into the ground.
 - In some cases, we may do both.
- ◆ In the winter months when you don't need the rain captured in your cistern for watering, the overflow will be directed to these planted areas where it can be naturally dispersed and filtered. In the summer months the cistern water will be available for irrigation.



Pilot program volunteer, John Gillespie, is pictured by his compost-enriched soil which will be planted with native grasses.

A “rain garden” is a shallow depression with compost-enriched soil, planted to be a beautiful landscape feature. During rainstorms, runoff flows into the rain garden where it is absorbed and slowly filters down into the soils. Soil and vegetation also clean the water before it reaches our streams and Puget Sound.



Cisterns catch roof runoff during storms, then slowly release it, to prevent flooding and sewer overflows.



Be a Pioneer

Historically, Seattle and the Pacific Northwest have been leaders and innovators on issues of conservation and environmental preservation. We lead the nation in efforts to recycle, enhance water and air quality, and preserve salmon runs.

Seattle RainCatchers is a three-year pilot program in the best tradition of this environmental focus. It combines efforts to conserve resources and prevent pollution through a grass-roots, neighborhood-based program.

Contact SPU to find out if this program is available in your neighborhood.

As a Seattle RainCatcher program partner, you can make a difference. Your participation helps SPU gather vital information to model this program for use on a larger scale. This grass-roots effort combined with alternative drainage techniques and water conservation is just what Seattle needs for a sustainable future.

For more information go to: www.seattle.gov/util/
click on: About SPU
scroll to bottom, click on: Seattle RainCatcher Pilot

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